



Mid-Cities Commodore Club

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MCCC NEWS

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DevCon-89

Bill Raecke

The Developer's Conference has just ended. Scott Lamb has just returned with lots of terrific information. I talked to him just briefly about what he found out and I thought the news was important enough to try to get some of it into this issue. Because of time restrictions (the newsletter will go to the printer in just a few days), and because you are receiving this information second-hand, it will be incomplete. I hope there are no mis-statements. If there are, it is the fault of your humble reporter - not Scott.

First, Scott was very impressed by Commodore's new president, Harold Copperman. He is, apparently, a very down-to-earth guy with very good credentials, having spent a good number of years with both IBM and Apple. He recognizes his goal as improving Commodore's marketing effort so that the Amiga can take its rightful place in the computer market. Look for a big marketing blitz to begin in October and continue through Christmas.

New hardware announcements included a network card supporting ETHERNET and NOVELL, an 8 port serial card, and the U. of Lowell graphic card with a resolution of 1024x1024x8 bitplanes yielding 256 on-screen colors from a palette of 16 million with 2 overlay bitplanes.

The big news of the conference was the release of details about AmigaDOS 1.4. It will be an upgrade of major proportions. Scott and the other developers were given documentation on the changes in two four-inch thick binders. As I said earlier, this will not be a complete list of new features.

The upgrade will require new ROM's and a new Chip Set. In return, here's part of what you get:

- ARexx is a standard part of the system.
- There is a library supplying a standard file requester, font requester, and system requesters.
- A Commodities Exchange provides simplified input handling, hot key management and cut & paste features.

- All c: commands have been rewritten in C.
- There is PET style screen editing in CON: windows.
- A Fatter Agnes provides 1 meg of chip memory and 32K by 32K blits.
- A new Denise provides VGA 640x480x4 non-interlaced graphics with a multisync monitor. There is also a super hires mode of 1280x200 with four colors for STANDARD MONITORS.
- There are new genlock features: ChromaKey, BitPlaneKey, BorderBlank, and BorderNotTransparent.
- There is preparation for Virtual Memory support. The word is that if 1.4 is delayed past the expected date, Virtual Memory may be made part of 1.4.
- FastFileSystem resides in ROM and supports floppies.
- Intuition changes include support for overscan and new PUBLIC screens which allow windows to migrate from one screen to another.
- The Workbench includes many new menu selections like "MakeDrawer" and "Select All". There is provision for listing a directory by icon or filename. You may add your own menu selections.
- The Workbench screen is super sized and scrollable.
- Disk icons appear in a resizable window.
- There are new window and directory gadgets.

What this all seems to boil down to is that the Amiga will once again be light-years ahead of the competition. I like it that way. Oh - I forgot. You're probably wondering when these marvels will be available for us mortals. 1.4 will be entering beta test phase within the next couple of weeks. Projections are that it will be available commercially by the end of the year.

Now there's a Christmas present!

Passing Arguments to Scripts

Amiga Instruction by Bill Raecke

Mid-Cities Commodore Club

If you have had your Amiga for a while, you undoubtedly know what a script file is. For those who don't, a script file is a collection of AmigaDOS commands and/or programs to be run which is stored as an ASCII (text) file that can be executed as if it were a program. Most bootable disks have at least one script file named "startup-sequence". This is the series of commands which is automatically executed by AmigaDOS each time you boot your computer. Look for it in a directory "s". This is where all script files should reside -- it will help you remember which files are scripts and which are not.

This article is not intended to be a tutorial on script files. If you understand AmigaDOS, a script file will be almost second nature - it is nothing but a series of those commands strung together. What I want to cover here is how to pass arguments to script files. It's not complicated or difficult to understand, but it seems to be a feature that has been almost totally overlooked in most of the books I have seen.

Passing arguments to a script file is done in the same way as if you are passing arguments to a program. For example, to copy a file, you type the command "COPY filea fileb". COPY is the command; filea and fileb are the arguments. The trick is not in how to specify the arguments, but in how to get your script file to use them.

Let us assume, for the sake of example, that we have a need to copy files on a regular basis to a disk in drive DF1:. The destination file is to have the same name as the source file as well as the same date/time stamp and the same comments. The AmigaDOS command to accomplish this is "COPY filea DF1: CLONE". We could build a script file to accomplish the same thing which would only require us to type "COPY filea" thus saving us some keystrokes. Here is what the script file would look like:

```
.key filename
ECHO "Copying file: <filename> to drive 1"
COPY "<filename>" DF1: CLONE
ECHO "Finished"
```

The ECHO commands are, of course, purely optional, but they make the command friendlier. The ".key" command establishes the variable name for the argument ("filename") and values it with the argument provided. The dot commands should come first in your script and they must begin in column one. Once the value for the variable is established, it may be referenced as often as necessary. Note that AmigaDOS will only recognize a variable name within a script if it is enclosed between a "<" and ">" symbol (Less-Than and Greater-Than). Also note that in the

example above, I enclosed the variable <filename> in quotes. This will allow for a value with imbedded spaces.

Let's change our script to a MOVE command. This script will copy a file to a specified destination, will check to see if the destination file exists, and will then delete the source. The command line to execute the script would be "MOVE filea destination", where "destination" is the disk or directory that the file should be copied to (for example, DF1:Newfiles/). Here is what the script might look like:

```
.key filename,dest
ECHO "Copying file: <filename> to <dest>"
COPY "<filename>" <dest> CLONE
IF exists <dest><filename>
    ECHO "Removing source file: <filename>"
    DELETE "<filename>"
ELSE
    ECHO "Copy unsuccessful"
ENDIF
```

Note that this time we have two arguments. They are separated by a comma in the ".key" command. The rest should be self-explanatory. Now for some more changes. We want the file name to be a mandatory entry - if it is not supplied, we want an error message "required argument missing". We also want to set up a default for the destination - if not supplied, it should default to "DF1:". Here is what the script looks like now:

```
.key filename/a,dest
ECHO "Copying file: <filename> to
    <dest>DF1:>"
COPY "<filename>" <dest> CLONE
IF exists <dest>DF1:><filename>
    ECHO "Removing source file: <filename>"
    DELETE "<filename>"
ELSE
    ECHO "Copy unsuccessful"
ENDIF
```

The "/a" following the variable name "filename" in the .key command means that this is a required argument. The \$ immediately following the variable name indicates that what follows is the default value.

There is another way to set a default value for a variable. Remove the \$DF1: from the variable names and instead, insert the following line immediately after the .key command.

```
.def dest DF1:
```

Continued on Page 4

Help With Building Scripts

Amiga Instruction by John Palmer

Reprinted from Amy Today

The script command language on the Amiga is under-appreciated compared to that of other machines (how many proud owners say "It comes with TWO languages - BASIC and executable scripts!"). Amiga users typically use scripts only when they have to; by comparison UNIX (a trademark of AT&T) users respect their "Shell programs" as of equal value to a well-crafted C or assembly language program.

Reasons for under-use of script programs include the need to specify "EXECUTE" for a script program, and the need to invoke an editor to make a new script program. AmigaDOS scripts have also lacked the abilities to branch or "SKIP" backwards and to have user interaction. The 1.3 upgrade adds the latter two abilities with the commands ASK and SKIP label BACK. The upgrade also adds the 's' protection bit so scripts will run without using the command EXECUTE.

Borrowed from a book on UNIX is a five-line script program that allows you to make simple scripts conveniently; this will serve both as a useful tool and a brief introduction to the use of scripts on the Amiga. I'll list and discuss sections of it, showing how this one evolved, and list it in full at the end. Keep in mind that you can (and should) extend or modify this for your own needs.

Humble beginnings:

"MakeScript" began as five simple lines:

```
.key filename
ECHO "End console input with ctrl-\"
COPY * to <filename>
;change above line to 'type to <filename>' for
;ARP use!
PROTECT <filename> +s
```

Line one tells the program to look for one argument or parameter which will be called "filename" within the script (and surrounded by "<>" when referred to). Line two reminds you how to complete entering your new script file (I always forget, and have to look it up!). Line three copies anything entered at the current window to the file specified (note that the asterisk is used by ARP as its wildcard, so replace 'copy * to <filename>' with 'type to <filename>' if you have ARP installed). After you've finished by typing the "control-backslash", line five makes this script directly executable.

Maybe this is too simple. What if you accidentally specify an existing filename? Shouldn't you protect yourself against replacing some essential command with a new script file? Sure. So, the program grows:

After the ".key filename" insert the following:

```
IF exists <filename>
    ECHO "File exists"
    QUIT 10
ENDIF
```

Straightforward enough: a conditional statement. If the file already exists, remind you of this, and "quit" with a condition code of 10 (to indicate a fairly serious problem to you or to another script calling this one). You can delete that file if you really want to replace it, or use another filename.

How about making the new script execute from WorkBench by using IconX? If you prepare by copying a working IconX icon to your s: directory as "makescript.icon" (so you remember what it is!) you could add this to the end of MakeScript:

```
COPY s:makescript.icon to <filename>.info
;copies icon to execute script from WB using
;IconX
```

In addition to command-line arguments, AmigaDOS scripts have access to environment variables, IF-THEN-ELSE constructs, user interaction, branching, pipes and no doubt a few more features I haven't encountered yet. For more elaborate use of the script language, see John Faichney's article "Examples of shell programming" in Transactor for the Amiga, Volume 1, Issue 4.

The full listing of MakeScript below is followed by an enhanced version using the ASK command.

Makescript:

```
.key filename
IF exists <filename>
    ECHO "File exists"
    QUIT 10
ENDIF
ECHO "End console input with ctrl-\"
COPY * to <filename>
;change above line to 'type to <filename>' for
;ARP use !
PROTECT <filename> +s
COPY s:makescript.icon to <filename>.info
;copies icon to execute script from WB using
;IconX
```

MakeScript2:

```
IF exists <filename>
    ASK "File exists. Replace it? (Y or N,
    RETURN=N)"
;get response from keyboard,
```

IF warn

;response was Yes, replace file

;resume execution after ENDIF

ELSE

;response was No (or RETURN)

;We could omit this ELSE section and

;fall through to the ENDIF, but I

;wanted the example!

echo "Try another name"

QUIT 5

;quit with error code, since script not

;written

ENDIF

ENDIF

ECHO "End console input with ctrl-\.."

COPY * to <filename>

;change above line to 'type to <filename>' for

;ARP use !

PROTECT <filename> +s

COPY s:makescript.icon to <filename>.info

;copies icon to execute script from WB using

;IconX

;everything ok

QUIT 0



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Passing Arguments to Scripts

Continued From Page 2

There are more dot commands. All are used in conjunction with arguments and all are used to redefine the characters that AmigaDOS uses to handle them. The values used are for example only - you get to pick your own substitutes. The redefinition will remain in effect only for the duration of the script.

.dot # ;# will now be used instead of a dot
.bra [;use the [instead of < for a left bracket
.ket] ;use the] instead of > for a right bracket
.dollar | ;use the | in place of the \$

That's about all there is to it. Just a couple of words of caution.

1) When using multiple arguments, the script file will parse the command line from left to right, picking up values as it goes. The space is used as a delimiter. If your variable has a space within it, surround it with

quotes.

2) The only way to skip argument 1 and supply argument 2 is to supply a null value for argument one. That is, simply supply a double quote with no value ("").

3) When AmigaDOS begins to execute a script file, if it detects a dot command it will make a copy of the script file in the t: directory, substituting values for variables as it goes. It then executes the copy. This can be painfully slow if your t: directory resides on a floppy. To eliminate this problem, make a directory called "t" in ram: and then "ASSIGN T: ram:t".

4) In order for a script file to be executed without first typing the word "execute", the script protection bit must be set on the file. (PROTECT filename +s). It will also be easier if you add the S: directory to your path.

ANSI Control Sequences - The Sequel

Amiga Reference Information by Bill Raecke
Mid-Cities Commodore Club

In the May issue of the MCCC News, I published a set of ANSI control sequences which could be used to control the print device (PRT:) and, in some cases, the console device (the CLI, CON:). Here are some supplemental codes which were not included in the original list. Unlike the first list, these are intended for use with the console device only. They bring new power to the ECHO command and can really spruce up a startup-sequence or other script file. The same sequences can be used to control CON: from any

program. They may also be imbedded as part of your PROMPT - for example, the current directory may be displayed in living color and underlined as it is on my system.

Where an "n" is part of the command sequence, it represents a numeric value. These values may be omitted if desired - the default value of "1" will be substituted by the system unless otherwise noted.

As mentioned in the last article, the ESC can be entered in an ECHO command as *e.

ESC[nE Cursor Down n lines - move to left margin
ESC[nF Cursor Up n lines - move to left margin
ESC[nB Cursor Down n lines - Same column
ESC[nA Cursor Up n lines - Same Column
ESC[nD Cursor Back n spaces
ESC[nC Cursor Forward n spaces
ESC[n;nH Cursor Position n=row;column
ESC[0 p Cursor Off
ESC[p Cursor On
ESC[M Delete Line - all lines below scroll up
ESC[nP Delete n characters to right
ESC[J Erase to end of display
ESC[K Erase to end of line
ESC[s;f;bm Select rendition
s=style
0=plain text
1=boldface
3=italic
4=underscore
7=reverse video
f=foreground
30 or 34=color 0
31 or 35=color 1
32 or 36=color 2
33 or 37=color 3

b=background
40 or 44=color 0
41 or 45=color 1
42 or 46=color
43 or 47=color 3

ESC[L Insert Line - scroll lines down
ESC[n@ Insert n spaces
ESCc Reset to initial state
ESC[nT Scroll n lines down
n lines are removed at bottom
all lines are scrolled down
cursor set to left margin
ESC[nS Scroll n lines up
n lines are removed at top
all lines are scrolled up
cursor set at left margin
ESC[nu Set n characters per line
(default n when omitted is window width)
ESC[nx Set n columns as left margin
ESC[nt Set n lines per window
(default n when omitted is window height)
ESC[ny Set n raster lines as top margin
(default n when omitted is top of window)

The Fine Print

The Mid-Cities Commodore Club is a not-for-profit organization devoted to the collection and dissemination of computer knowledge, to the encouragement of computer education, and to the use of Commodore computers in the home, at school, and in business. Appropriate and legal use of all types of software is encouraged by this club.

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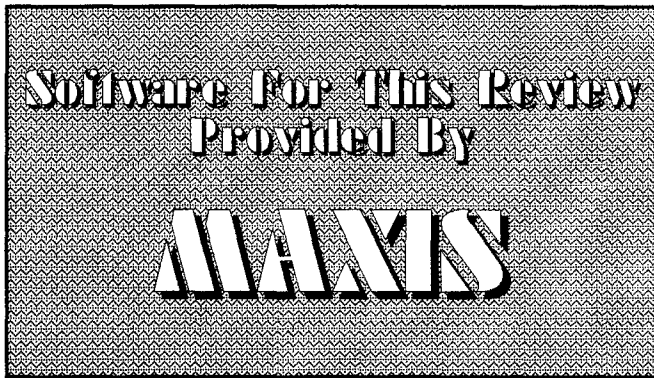
Sim City

C64 Review

Eldor Luedtke, Jr.

Have you ever wished that you could be in total control of a city or town? Have you ever thought that your city planner's office must be a room in the local funny farm, or that you could do a better job of it? Well don't just sit there, do something. Go get Sim City.

Sim City is the first product from a new entertainment software company called Maxis. It's called a system simulator, in this case the system is a city, town or linked group of small communities. They provide you with a set of rules and tools, you do the rest.



Maxis has included on the program disk, eight Scenario Cities to explore, learn from and try to save. Each one has a flaw or an impending disaster. One of these is Detroit, Mi. where you are to try to pull the city out of the recession of 1972.

When you think you're ready to start, you choose a landscape or make your own. After you have that done, start zoning land, running power lines, roads and water lines. Just like in the real world, you have to make sure the people have a place to live, work and play. Also like the real world, if the city is poorly planned, polluted or has too much of a traffic problem, people move out.

Would you like to test your city's mettle? Try out the disaster menu. You can turn loose a Fire, Tornado, Monster or an Earthquake. Then see if you can put it back together. You could also do what I did to Detroit, use them all at once, now that really messed things up.

Who is Sim City for? Well, if you want joystick twisting arcade action, it's not for you. But if you like software that lets you use your imagination and give the ol grey matter a good workout, I think this one is for you.

As for star ratings, I'm an arcade type, but I still like it. It's well written and the user documentation is nicely done, so I'm giving this one a four star rating.

Hints & Tips

C64 & C128 Help

Eldor Luedtke, Jr.

If you're like me, you're always looking for a better way to do things. So I put together a list of things that I have picked up to make things easier or cheaper.

Write protect tabs: The ones they put in the box are not always that good, so I use electrical tape. The tape sticks better than most of the tabs provided with your disk.

Book markers: Take those write protect tabs you did not use and fold them over the pages where the important stuff is, leaving about 1/4 inch sticking out. Now you can find the stuff you need faster.

Single/Double sided disk: If you have a 1571 drive and want a good way to tell the double sided disk apart from the single sided, fold a piece of colored tape across the top of the double sided disks to mark them. You can also color code your disks by using one color for games, etc.

Disk labels: When I buy new software, if I can, I make a back-up copy and put the original in a safe place. When I want to put a nice looking label on it, I use GeoPaint to make it (other art packages may be used). I first use the box command to get the outline and print it for a size test. When it's the right size I use the file as a blank and make labels from dups of it. This way I can keep my original disk safe and have good looking labels on my working copies that include color, graphics and fonts. I print the labels on white computer paper, but if you don't have a color printer you can use colored paper. Don't use the dark colors as the print will not show well. I cut them out and use a glue stick to apply them. They may also be applied with double-sided carpet tape.

1541 drive heat: If you have a 1541 drive that gets hot, try this. Go to Radio Shack and get some stick-on feet, apply them to the ones on your drive. This will raise your drive some allowing more air to get in. Remember, never place things too close to the drive as you could cut off the air to your drive and that will cause it to heat up.

Longer ribbon life: When you're not going to be using your printer for a while, take the ribbon out and wrap it in a sandwich bag. This will keep it from drying out. This does not apply to thermal transfer printers.

Print head life: Try to stay away from cheap ribbons with high rag content. They may save you bucks now, but they are hard on the print head. Also don't use paper that is too rough as this is also not good on the print head. Smoother paper also gives a better looking print out.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY U.S.A.



GeoCalc

C64 Software Review by David Haight Reprinted from the newsletter of C=West

Well, if you are one of those obsessive GEOS software users waiting for Berkeley Softworks to develop a spreadsheet program that is easy to learn, has real nice print styles and is able to handle large projects, this is it! Here's a brief summary of the strengths of this program.

1. A good user's manual
2. Relatively large spread sheets are possible.
3. Different print styles are available.
4. Easy pull-down menus.
5. Left, enter and right cell justification.
6. A variety of functions relating to financing, mathematics and statistics.
7. The ability to exchange data with GeoFile and GeoWrite files and documents.

The spreadsheet is limited in that it cannot generate tables and graphs, cannot copy to more than one cell from a single cell and its split screen works with rows, but not columns.

"...the program is closely modeled after Excel, the first 'third generation' program..."

First, let's consider the strengths of this inventive program. Generally, the program is closely modeled after Excel, the first "third generation" program developed to give the user icons and other easy-to-learn visual aids, and thus eliminating the need to learn coded commands with routines and sub-routines and sub-sub-routines and ... (I think you get the idea). For those of you who have never used a spreadsheet program, a spreadsheet can take rows (or columns) of numbers and perform mathematical and statistical functions and operations with them. For example, in my profession as a teacher, I use a spreadsheet to keep records of student performance (grades) and yet I can also call upon statistical functions to determine overall class (low or high) averages to determine what material was not understood. In financing, spreadsheets have been used as a forecasting tool in budgeting expenses and asset allocations. It is easy in home applications to develop a spreadsheet to keep records of checking and savings balances. The applications are so various that new ways of using them are being thought up still.

Ever use a manual where:

- you couldn't locate a subject through the index?

• the instructions didn't jibe with what was happening on the screen?

• procedures were completely left out?

Well, while I admit that this isn't saying much, the GeoCalc spreadsheet manual is outstanding when compared to others. It takes you through easy-to-follow steps in how to develop a basic spreadsheet. Further, this manual is elaborate in illustrating and explaining the features of this spreadsheet. What is really incredible, however, is that they even provide you with a couple of phone numbers if (and eventually when) you get stuck. This is unlike so many other software developers where as soon as you open the package and find a scant packet of instructions you can almost hear ghost-like laughter and a voice quipping, "You're on your own, sucker! Bet ya can't figger this out!! Ha! Ha!"

Ever use a spreadsheet where the instructions boast about "up to 250 rows of space available!" and when you use it, you get that (ahem) uncomfortable "memory full" message (or NO MESSAGE - JUST A FROZEN SCREEN) after using about 12 columns and 75 rows? Yeah, not a great feeling after you had designed the sheet with intentions to number crunch the remaining two tables of data you haven't entered yet. Well, the size of a spreadsheet file with GeoCalc is virtually the room on your disk or the grid size (rows and columns). GeoCalc only holds in memory the area of spreadsheet that you are working on. While this can be slow if you have a large spreadsheet, this spreadsheet exploits the 1764 or 1750 RAM expander (I realize that purchasing THIS is real iffy these days).

Another nice feature to this program is the flexibility to present your data in various formats and styles. You can embold or italicize numbers or labels. You can easily present numbers or labels which are justified left, right or center. You may also format numbers to be expressed to a specified decimal place. Use pull-down menus to format columns of numbers to be expressed as money (\$) or percentages. Unlike some other spreadsheets (Lotus, Swiftcalc), you cannot sort labels and numbers (although if you "pour" your data into GeoFile you could do this).

As far as the mathematical games you may wish to play on this with your numbers, you may go the pull-down menu and select one of various functions. This eliminates the need to memorize functions such as SQRT (square root) or LN (log of a number). You just go grab whatever you want and then apply it to your needs. Like other programs, the order of mathematical operations is algebraic. That is, exponents are calculated first, then division and multiplication and lastly addition and subtraction.

Continued on Page 10

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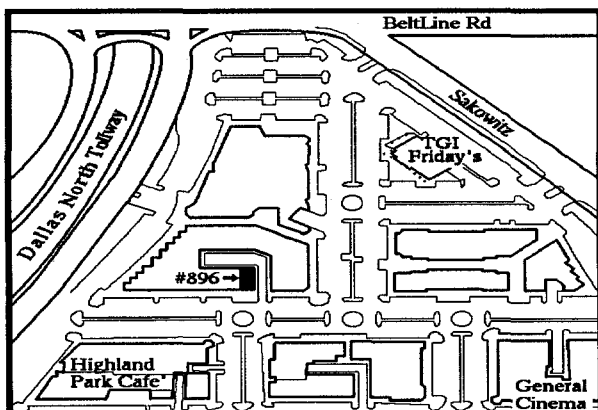
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Librarian	Curtis Crago	281-0568

GeoCalc Continued From Page 8

Unlike powerful programs like Lotus, you can't have the spreadsheet perform database-like functions involving, say, the input of a section of a spreadsheet, evaluation to match a predetermined criterion and the output of cells or cell ranges which match the criteria. It can do this in limited ways in that GeoCalc and evaluate a range of data for the largest or smallest defined values, but I saw nothing in the manual regarding equalities or inequalities (<,>). Still, considering the computer this is designed for, this program provides plenty of calculation and argument potential.

Now, a few weaknesses worth considering. The screen on your worksheet may be split horizontally, but I was unable to get a split screen to enter data

based on information in a column instead of just a row or rows. If your are entering data 10 columns from a column of names for which that data belongs, you will have to jump back and forth -- a very inconvenient arrangement. No graphs are possible in this program, but the memory limitations have to be considered.

Generally, if you enjoy using GeoWrite and have never used a spreadsheet before and want to learn how, this is really for you. Advanced spreadsheet users can also have fun with some of the advanced mathematical offerings of this program and (if GeoFile is also bought) may transfer files and take advantage of the strong features of other GEOS applications.

Rating on a scale of 1 being horrible to 10 being outstanding, GeoCalc rates an 8.

New Stuff I Just Got

Amiga Software Reviews by Bill Raecke

Mid-Cities Commodore Club

SlipStream by Microdeal

Microdeal is a company that specializes in low-priced games. It has always been a mixed bag, but they have brought us such winners as GoldRunner in the past. Unfortunately, SlipStream is not another winner.

The concept is standard space shoot-em-up stuff. That is not necessarily a bad thing - I enjoy space shoot-em-ups if they are done well. In this one, the view is from an imaginary point behind your spaceship. You are transported across a landscape where objects (maybe buildings of a city?) provide obstructions which you must either blow up or fly around. At the same time, there are enemy ships which travel across your path dropping some kind of bomb. You must avoid the bombs and ships while trying to blow up the ships and scenery. (The old gamer's rule works well here: "If it moves, shoot it - if it doesn't move, shoot it anyway").

The problem is not in concept, although it is a pretty uncomplicated scenario, but in execution. The graphics are done in lo-res and are pretty blocky by Amiga standards. The background is done in overscan, but, inexplicably, there is a black bar across the top of the screen while, at the bottom, lettering disappears below the visible area. The sound quality is poor - the digitized voice that wishes you "Good Luck Commander" is so muddy that you may have to hear it several times to make it out.

All in all, although it was very reasonably priced (about \$15), it was not worth the money I paid. Don't bother.

DisqOpti V1.20 by Claude Abraham

DisqOpti is another floppy disk re-organizer that speeds disk access by placing things on the disk in a more organized fashion. In the May issue of the MCCC News, Johnny Kitchens reviewed FastDisk from our club library and B.A.D., a commercial program. Since this new program, DisqOpti, is also available from the club library or from the BBS (look for DiskTools.pak), I thought it might be appropriate to do a quick comparison. Unfortunately, since I do not own a copy of B.A.D., it will not be included.

I tested standard AmigaDOS, FastDisk and DisqOpti using two disks. The first was my PageStream program disk; the second was the associated Fonts disk. I made a copy of each disk using each of the methods. Note that with FastDisk, I used the default setting. Also note that for the AmigaDOS comparison, I made a fresh disk using the command "COPY DF0: to DF1: ALL" to make sure that the copy was as clean as AmigaDOS could provide. Many people tend to forget that ANY disk on

ANY COMPUTER becomes slower as files become fragmented due to repeated additions, deletions, and updates. The only way to do a fair comparison, therefore, was to start with a fresh AmigaDOS disk.

Here is the procedure I used to time the disks. Before each operation, I removed the disk from the drive and then replaced it to ensure that the buffers were all totally clean. First, I performed a copy command "COPY DF0: TO RAM: ALL". This test should provide a relative benchmark as to how fast copies and program loads will function. I then did a directory command "DIR DF0: ALL". Finally, on the PageStream disk, I opened the disk window to see how quickly the icons loaded.

Here are the results (rounded to the nearest second):

PageStream Disk

	AmigaDOS	FastDisk	DisqOpti
Copy all	2 min 22 sec	1 min 41 sec	1 min 41 sec
Dir all	13 sec	27 sec	24 sec
Icon Test	6 sec	3 sec	9 sec

Fonts Disk

	AmigaDOS	FastDisk	DisqOpti
Copy all	2 min 1 sec	1 min 8 sec	1 min 11 sec
Dir all	12 sec	25 sec	23 sec

Take a look at those figures. The most surprising thing (to me, at least) was to discover that our old faithful, much-maligned AmigaDOS is approximately twice as fast as the "disk-speedup" programs when it comes to directory listings. The second thing to notice is that both FastDisk and DisqOpti are about twice as fast as AmigaDOS when it comes to copying files and loading programs. The last test seems to indicate that if you use the Workbench a lot, FastDisk is the quickest by far - and DisqOpti will actually slow you down.

As to which program is best for you, it will probably be a personal decision based on what types of operations you perform most often with the disk in question. There is one other factor, however. FastDisk seems to crash the system from time to time. It normally will happen only with a rather full disk, and only after completing the copy - in the process, rendering your new disk useless. DisqOpti and AmigaDOS, on the other hand, are both solid performers.

As for me, I'm slowly optimizing my disks using DisqOpti. Program loads are much more important than directory scans to me and I seldom use the Workbench. Try it - you'll like it.

Thinker

An Amiga Software Review by Leila Joiner Reprinted from the Catalina Computer Club Newsletter

Funny how life has a way of putting the very thing we need right under our nose, so that all we have to do is open our eyes and it'll be there. And when we don't open our eyes, we're apt to stumble over it anyway. It was like that with me and Thinker.

I wanted a good outline processor for the Amiga, and couldn't find anything I liked. On the verge of buying Brainstorm for the C-128, I happened to pick up the latest copy of INFO and read a short item about an "idea processor" with "hypertext capabilities". Wow! This sounded like my wish come true. I quickly ordered it from the parent company, Poor Person Software in Palo Alto, CA.

At this point I have to inject a positive note about this company. I sent them a short memo and a personal check, and the software was in my hot little hands in five days! They didn't even wait for the check to clear. What's more, the program has a 30 day money-back guarantee. I call that good customer relations.

Thinker is the kind of program I could rave about forever. A simplistic, user-friendly interface coupled with an underlying complexity provides a structure flexible enough for the most fertile imagination. Thinker is easy enough to use every day, and broad enough to be employed in a whole spectrum of tasks.

OK, you say, what exactly does it do?

Well, for example, I am using it as a simple word processor right now to write this article. True, this is not its strongest feature, but it does have basic text editing capabilities, such as word-wrap, cut, paste, copy, search and replace, normal cursor, backspace and delete key functions, a carriage return character and escape key (which can be used for imbedded printer commands). Flat ASCII text files may be either imported or exported with several options. You can print a whole document or any designated branch of a document.

As an outline processor, it supports hierarchical text formatting at the click of a mouse button. The first statement in a document is referred to as the origin statement. Succeeding statements may be inserted at any time in any part of the document at any designated level. Indentations are automatic. "Clipping" allows any number of levels to be hidden, except the origin statement. When clipping is used, "+" or "-" signs preceding statements are clicked on to display or hide statements within the clipped levels. Only the level below the statement indicated will be brought into view. Thus, I was able to use Thinker to make a list of authors I admire. When I click on the "+" in front of any author's name, a statement appears describing what attributes I admire in that person's writing. The information is all there, but the screen is

not cluttered.

"Links" and "labels" provide hypertext capabilities. Labels are surrounded by parentheses and precede a statement. Any statement beginning with the character "(" is recognized as a labeled statement. Labels may be hidden if desired, to improve the appearance of the text.

Links are labels appearing within the body of the text. A link can be a single word or "a string of characters delimited by '<' and '>'". When you double-click on a link, you jump to wherever (or whatever) the link designates. You can link to: a label in the same document or a different document, on another disk; an IFF picture file; any Workbench application. Picture files may be viewed as a whole screen, or as a miniature in a separate window. Applications can be called up and multi-tasked.

When you have jumped around enough to lose your bearings, you can select "Jump - Return" and the last six of 16 previous locations will pop up in a requester. Clicking on the desired location will take you there. If totally confused, you can select "Jump - Origin" from the drop-down menu and take a quantum leap to the place you started from. Any jump gives you the option of viewing it in the present window, a new window or another window (one previously opened for the same purpose). A double-click anywhere on the screen opens a pop-up menu listing the insert tools and the jump option. All requesters have "Cancel" options.

I tried really hard to GURU this program, and just couldn't do it. Every goof I made had a back exit. I'm sure it's possible. Memory limitations would be one way. The program itself is not large, but it stores as much text in memory as it can to avoid unnecessary disk access. A "read cache" is supplied with the program for this purpose, but the developers advise using FaccII, if available. Since I have 2-1/2 meg, run Workbench out of RAD:, and use a 512K FaccII, I had no problems. The program will run on a 512K system, however.

A couple of additional goodies are "Make Index", which creates an instant, alphabetized listing of all labels within a document; and "Update Icon", which records your option settings as the default options for the document icon (all documents are saved with icons).

What's bad about Thinker? Well, memory limitations might be a problem on some systems. According to the authors, previous versions for PC-DOS and CP/M systems suffered from lack of memory. The manual (created with Thinker, naturally) is an exceptionally intelligent production by most software standards, but, alas, it has no index! It does

provide a tutorial, however, and the example program on the disk covers most of the options. It's easy to get started, and before very long it becomes second nature to use.

If you're used to keyboard-oriented outline processors, you may have a problem. Thinker is completely mouse-driven, except for some of the editing function, which have keyboard equivalents. I'm so used to using GEOS on the C-128 that switching from keyboard text input to mouse-click commands is not disruptive.

Some suggested applications for Thinker include: planning a book, organizing picture files, Thinker documents as databases, a desktop organizer, and screen "real estate" (viewing and manipulating large text files on a small screen). The disk contains several sample documents. One example is a "To-Do" list of projects underway. Each project can be defined, and related applications can be opened by clicking on a link. A "Show Date" option toggles a date-time stamp for each entry on the list, so it's easy to keep track of updates.

My first use of Thinker was to set up a disk for creative writing ideas -- outlines, plots, sketches, titles, characterizations, etc. These were scattered over several disks as PaperClip files, originally set up on the C-128. Now they are not only all on one disk, I can interrelate them in any way I choose.

Thinker will work on an interlaced screen. Thinker is compatible with HPrint (a typesetting program by Poor Person Software for the HP LaserJet printer). I purchased it for \$59. According to INFO, this was an introductory price; as of April, the list price is \$79.

Thought For the Month

"If all else fails, immortality can always be assured by spectacular error."

- John Kenneth Galbraith

CLUB DISCOUNTS

These dealers offer special discounts to club members
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Hardware and Service
2720 Royal Lane
Dallas, Texas
(214) 484-7838

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Amiga Software and Hardware
(817) 244-4150

Computer Skills

Amiga Software and Hardware
66 Wilshire Village
Euless, Texas
(817) 267-5151

Sof-Tex

C64, C128, Amiga Repair
(817) 577-0410 (Metro)

CHAPTER NEWS

Amiga Central Bill Raecke

Our June meeting featured a presentation of AMax, the MacIntosh emulator for the Amiga by Jack Smith. Jack is slowing building himself quite a machine, what with an IBM AT and a MacIntosh built in. And, it will soon be running on a 68030 - as soon as his GVP card comes in. At any rate, AMax is an impressive product. Jack said he had problems with only two software packages he has tried. Overall, it appears to run flawlessly and even allows such niceties as a RAM disk option. The only disadvantage seems to be that it takes over the Amiga - it will not co-process as will the IBM card. All in all, it's a pretty exciting package considering that it you can buy an Amiga and set it up to run as a MacIntosh for less money than the Mac would cost - and it will run better and faster to boot.

Our two door prizes for the evening were furnished by Amazing Computer Systems. The winners were Arthur Wright and Jay Johnsgard. Our thanks to Amazing Computer Systems for their generosity and support.

Don't miss the July meeting. We should have details on AmigaDOS 1.4 and possibly a demonstration. See you on July 20.

Arlington/Grand Prairie Eddie Allen

The Grand Prairie workshop convened after a partial rendition

of the May downpours on Tuesday night. The attendance was low, but we did have one visitor. Remember that this informal meeting is a great opportunity to get one on one help with just about anything. If you have a problem with one of your programs, maybe we can help you out -- just remember to bring your disk.

The Tuesday night (June 20) meeting saw a delightful presentation of the club's D-Paint (as in digital) package. This program was written by Aaron Hightower, who just happened to be one of the main architects of the MCCC Graphics BBS. You can create full screen COLOR files compatible with the GBBS. This package has to be one of the easiest to use, and does not scrimp on the features in the bargain. The ease of use brought to my mind an occasion when my youngest daughter tried to use one of the commercial programs and gave up in frustration. We want to thank Robyn Wilson, who happens to be secretary/reporter of the HEB chapter, for her entertaining presentation. She handed out printed documentation, short-hand sheet, and a work sheet for everyone. There are a few extra copies left that will be available at the next meeting.

Jesse Carden was our lucky door-prize winner of the "Original" Parameter Cross-Reference by the Edward A Mallang Co. of Everett, WA. This allows you to find the appropriate backup program you need in order to make your personal working copy of a commercial program. We want to thank them for this contribution.

The news and information (they are not necessarily the same)

period expounded on some locations that are having some good sales on a variety of software packages. Our July meeting on Tuesday night will feature a GENEALOGY package. The presenter will be Mr. Charles Hinckley of Fort Worth. Last night we had a good turnout, with 7 visitors present. Hopefully we will be able to see every one at the next meeting(s). Until then, have a safe and happy month of summer weather.

Fort Worth Mary Louise Hagemeyer

At our June meeting Donald Tate reviewed Library Disk #298, which has some entertaining arcade-type games as well as the ever-popular "Wet Paint". James Dunnam reviewed #723, titled "Diet". This disk is full of nutritional information about many foods and would be helpful for menu planning.

One of our members has asked if there is a spreadsheet program in the club library. Can anybody recommend one?

The BASIC lesson was a discussion of a program to load machine-language code from DATA statements.

Our thanks to Jim Marshall for his well-prepared description of the Disk Operating System. There was too much material to cover in one meeting, so he agreed to give DOS Part II in September.

For our next meeting, Bob Krause will demonstrate some of the "Carmen Sandiego" programs. The meeting will be Saturday, July 15, 1:30 p.m., at the library on Hulen Street.

CHAPTER NEWS

Hurst/Eules/Bedford Robyn Wilson

The June meeting turned out to be a very interesting meeting to me and everyone else. We had a great turnout of people in attendance. We are hoping that the membership grows even more.

Jesse Cardin brought in his biorhythm program. He demonstrated it and then let everyone print out their biorhythm if they wanted to. The program calculates your physical, sensitivity, and intellectual level for a certain time of the month. It will also tell you what day of the week you were born on and how many days and years old you are. All this using your birth date for data.

While Eldor Luedtke, Jr. was setting up his computer for his demo on Geos, I decided to try out a new way of getting people to meet each other in our group. What was involved was me and Eldor's daughter, Kristi handing out small slips of paper to everyone. On each paper there was either one word or one definition. Once everyone had theirs, I told them to find the person who had the matching word or definition and introduce themselves to the other person. Afterward I had everyone read the slips of paper in pairs of words and definitions. There were a lot of new introductions made.

When Eldor was ready he presented a fine demonstration of Geos version 2.0 on the C128. Geos has now been made 33% faster than the previous version. The C64 version is alike and has

similar features. He had all the information that he presented on one 3 1/2" disk with a 1581 drive for convenience. The disk has 800K of disk storage. He talked mostly about GeoWrite, GeoPaint and GeoFile.

GeoWrite is a word processor that has many functions to produce output of text and graphics in a clear and concise way. It has all the commands on the screen to help set up your document. They are set up across the top of the screen on several pull down menus. The text can be blocked left and right, centered or full justified. There is a spelling checker also. It supports graphics and fonts up to 24 points. GeoWrite is a powerful, "what you see is what you get" word processor which can be real helpful when you are trying to be precise with your work.

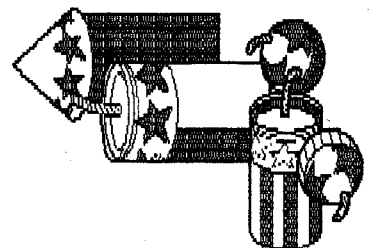
GeoPaint is a full page graphics editor. It also has bit map graphics that supports 80 x 80 dot per inch graphics resolution. It utilizes the same pull down menus as the other Geos modules. Point & click at different pattern fills, pencils, paints, colors, shapes, etc. Try out the features that cut and paste, resize and scale to fit your paper for future printout. Ellipses and circles come out much more precise in Version 2.0. Boxes and rectangles still come out clear in this version.

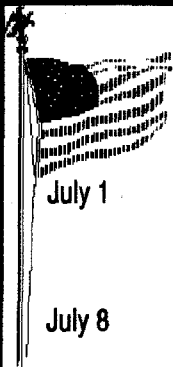
GeoFile is a database program. It holds up to 3,000 records per database and supports graphics. Each records can hold up to 64 fields. Geofile can search for any field by creating a search form. With this feature you can reorganize your data by any field.

Be there for the next meeting

on July 15th at the Hurst Recreation Center located on Mary Drive in Hurst. The time is the same as always, 1:30 p.m. We would like to know if there are any people interested in ham or pocket radio. This is a small field to be in but yet a very interesting one. I had the opportunity to use one at the last meeting and thought it was neat. Ham radios can be used with the C64's by a special interface to relay information about weather, disasters, warnings and much more to other operators far and near to the scene. Please introduce yourself to the librarian, Curtis Crago for more information.

Also at the July meeting we are having a demonstration of The Quick Brown Box. Brad Dumler, Vice President of the Arlington/Grand Prairie Chapter, will be showing us how to use this. It is a battery backed RAM cartridge that can hold as much as 64k of programs for instant (about one second) loading into the computer. These programs are stored there until the next time you need them. If you would like to learn more about this powerful little cartridge, come to our meeting and just sit back and enjoy the talk.





Calendar of Events

July 1	MCCC Board of Directors 10:00 AM - N.Richland Hills Community Ctr. Jack DeTore, 817-275-3762	July 15	Hurst-Euless-Bedford Chapter 1:30 PM - Hurst Recreation Center Eldor Luedtke, Jr., 817-626-0518
July 8	Arlington/Grand Prairie Workshop 1:30 PM - Grand Prairie Library Louis Nailor, 214-262-4576	July 18	Arlington/Grand Prairie Chapter 7:00 PM - Arlington Community Center Glen Herring, 817-572-0489
July 11	Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter 7:30 PM - N.Richland Hills Church of Christ Brent Wood - 817-246-3707	July 20	Amiga Central Chapter 7:30 PM - Arlington Community Center Bill Keatley, 817-485-0666
July 15	Fort Worth Chapter 1:30 PM - Southwest Regional Library Bob Krause, 817-292-6639	August 5	MCCC Board of Directors 10:00 AM - N.Richland Hills Community Ctr. Jack DeTore, 817-275-3762

August Newsletter Deadline - July 17

Normal Meeting Schedule

1st Sat	MCCC Board of Directors	3rd Tues	Arlington/Grand Prairie Chapter
2nd Tues	Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter	3rd Thurs	Amiga Central Chapter
2nd Sat	Arlington/Grand Prairie Workshop	3rd Sat	Fort Worth Chapter HEB Chapter

MCCC NEWS

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